TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS FOR SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY

July 1987

Recommendations of the
Institute of Transportation Engineers
Study Team

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The Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) is the nonprofit professional society of transportation professionals engaged in planning, designing, operating, managing, and maintaining the surface transportation systems of the world. Its membership includes over 8500 transportation professionals in more than 70 countries, approximately 7000 of whom practice their profession in the United States.

Institute members serve in key positions at all levels of government—including the U.S. Department of Transportation; state, county, and local transportation agencies; metropolitan planning organizations; and transit, parking, and toll authorities. Others are employed by consultants, industry and universities.

The purpose of the Institute is to enable engineers and other professionals with knowledge and competence in transportation and traffic engineering to contribute individually and collectively toward meeting human needs for mobility and safety.

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Summary

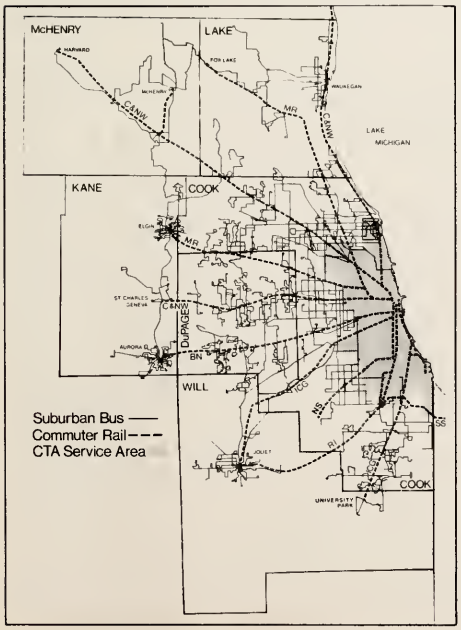
The Project

Suburban Cook County has been labeled the sleeping giant of the Chicago metropolitan area. But it is not sleeping anymore. The forecast for significant increases in employment and number of households for suburban Cook County over the next 20 years will compound the existing mobility problems generated by the growth in suburban Cook County to date.

As part of an initiative to form a partnership with suburban municipalities for the purpose of addressing the mobility needs in the Chicago metropolitan area, the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) launched an effort to review the transportation problems in suburban Cook County and to recommend a program of actions aimed at reducing traffic congestion and improving travel and commuting in the county.

To assist in this effort, the RTA enlisted the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). ITE formed a study team to develop specific recommendations to improve mobilty in suburban Cook County, with special emphasis on the multi-faceted role that transit can and should play in suburban Cook County.

In developing its recommendations, the ITE study team reviewed information assembled by the staff of RTA, including suburban Cook County demographics and background on general and specific transportation issues facing suburban Cook County. The ITE study team also toured existing transportation facilities in south and west Cook County and interviewed many Cook County community and transportation leaders. Finally, the study team participated in a 1½ day workshop attended by over 100 public and private sector leaders on "Transportation Options for Suburban Cook County," conducted on July 15-16, 1987.



RTA System

Recommendations

Although the RTA is the focal point for many of the recommendations of the ITE study team, a number of the recommendations will require action and cooperation among all levels of government, transportation agencies, and the private sector if the mobility needs of suburban Cook County are to be met. A brief summary of the key ITE study team recommendations is presented below.

The RTA: RTA can play a significant role in reducing overlapping services and responsibilities and in determining the best allocation of scarce funding resources. Formal arrangements to assure that public officials and private interests continue to be included in the transportation planning process should be considered by the RTA.

Within the RTA, ongoing and total coordination among the RTA and its Service Boards is essential. The RTA strategic plan must be flexible enough to address needs as they arise and to take some chances on unproven options, which may necessitate a combined public/private effort and an innovative marketing plan.

If transit is to play a viable role in serving the future transportation needs of suburban Cook County, a combination of conventional and innovative transit services will have to be pursued by the RTA. Information on schedules and stops must be complete and easy to obtain, and the use of new technologies should be considered to help achieve this. Initiatives begun by Pace will need to be pursued further, including targeted demand-responsive and subscription paratransit services to specific origins and destinations. To achieve the predictability and time savings incentives necessary to entice increased transit use, all options to provide transit service on separate rights-of-way should be seriously investigated by RTA. In addition, high occupancy vehicle express lanes have been implemented safely and to great advantage in other areas throughout the country, and their use on suburban Cook County highway should be encouraged by the RTA.

RTA should be involved in any discussions regarding the planning and operation of existing and future highway toll facilities in suburban Cook County. Priority treatment for transit and other high occupancy vehicles at toll booths, interchanges, and on the highway should be an integral part of these discussions.

RTA should serve as a clearinghouse for the testing of new transit service and innovations. Seed money to test innovative ideas that—if successful—can then be implemented by service providers and local agencies, should be provided by the RTA.

RTA should sponsor a program to demonstrate how nontraditional transportation modes can be used to serve suburban employment centers, and to identify opportunities for private sponsorship and delivery of such transportation.

Transit-dependent markets in suburban Cook County need to be better identified and served. The RTA should conduct demonstration programs to serve the needs of the transit-dependent persons, including a demonstration of how pockets of unemployment can be linked by transit to employment centers in suburban Cook County.

To encourage transit accessibility in new land use developments, the RTA should develop criteria for transit access in site layout and design. These criteria should then be distributed by RTA to zoning and planning boards. In addition, the RTA should continue to pursue joint development around transit stations in coordination with local interests. If the coordination between transportation and land use is to be improved, public and private groups will have to become better educated on the potential effects of transportation on land development and redevelopment, as well as the likely effects of development on the transportation system. The RTA would be an appropriate organization to provide this training through a series a short seminars.

To reduce the stress of using the overall system, the RTA should further strengthen the coordination of bus, rapid transit, and commuter rail service. Station parking, feeder/distributor bus service, and the rail service should be operated as integral parts of one system.

Suburban Cook County's rail system is a unique and irreplaceable resource. The RTA should initiate a review of the rail network in suburban Cook County leading to the preservation of rights-of-way for possible future transit use. The review should include all rail lines not currently used for passenger service. Long-term staged development of these rail corridors should be considered so as to continuously adapt to changing development and travel desire patterns.

Municipalities: Working individually and through municipal associations and Councils of Mayors, the municipalities should be directly involved in the planning and implemen-

tating of transportation improvements for suburban Cook County. The municipalities need to communicate to RTA the needs of their constituents. It is the local organizations that would be in the best position to directly involve citizens and employers in implementing transportation solutions, and to coordinate development with the transportation system. Consideration should be given to strengthening and expanding the roles of existing local organizations so that they can work together to solve transportation problems on a county-wide basis. These organizations include the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association, the West Central Municipal Conference, the North Central Regional Conference of Mayors, and the Southwest Council of Mayors.

A stronger commitment to land use management by the local municipalities will be necessary so that future development patterns will be more amenable to transit service. For example, the granting of building and zoning permits should be linked with the provisions of facilities to serve transportation needs. The local zoning and planning boards should require transit-compatible design as a condition of development approval.

Cooperative Government Efforts: A coordinated transportation planning process for suburban Cook County should be considered. With a coordinated transportation planning process, suburban Cook County will be in a better position to determine its current and future needs. The RTA, officials of Cook County, Illinois Department of Transportation, Illinois State Toll Highway Authority, Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS), and the municipal associations and Councils of Mayors within suburban Cook County should work together to develop and to implement a coordinated transportation planning process for suburban Cook County.

Efforts should be made to encourage future land use development patterns that are more amenable to transit—corridors and activity centers with high transit accessibility. A complete and responsive data base of existing and proposed land uses and transportation capabilities for suburban Cook County should be developed and maintained.

Cooperation among government agencies at all levels will be necessary to implement the recommendations contained in this report for the I-57/ICG/Rock Island corridors, the Tri-State Tollway corridor, and O'Hare International Airport. For example, due to the strategic importance of the Tri-State corridor, the chairperson of RTA, the secretary of the Illinois Department of Transportation, and the executive director of the Illinois Toll Highway Authority should jointly appoint a special task force to study problems and opportunities in the Tri-State corridor.

The Private Sector: One common ingredient of successful transit and ridesharing programs has been employer and private sector support. The private sector can provide many direct incentives to employees to change their travel behavior. For example, flexible work hours, ridesharing programs, and employer subsidies to users of public transportation are but a few of the measures that can be implemented both on an individual company basis and on an areawide basis.

Working with public agencies, the private sector should encourage the formation of Transportation Management Associations (TMAs). TMAs can be set up for major activity centers or for specific corridors, and can provide policy leadership and advocacy, demand management, and transportation service.

The private sector should consider taking advantage of the options now available to directly provide transportation service. These options include contracting with a public agency to provide transit service, nonsubsidized private transit service, employer-paid service for employees, and service sponsored by major activity centers.

More attention needs to be paid to locating buildings and their entrances so as to optimize pedestrian access to transit stations and stops. The physical design of new development should encourage transit and high occupancy vehicle use.

Finally, the potential for private funding should not be underestimated. Private involvement in financing transportation improvements is growing. Private transit operators, developer impact fees, and tax increment districts are being seen more and more across the country.

The full report describes in more detail the ITE study team's observations and recommendations. On behalf of the ITE study team, the Institute of Transportation Engineers is pleased to submit this report to the RTA. The Institute hopes that the report will prove to be informative and useful in the consideration of transportation options for suburban Cook County.

Foreword

The Institute of Transportation Engineers would like to thank all those who contributed to the success of this effort, including:

- The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) Board, its chairman Samuel K. Skinner, and the following RTA Board members from suburban Cook County:

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  William Walsh

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  Robert B. Teska, Co-Chairman
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  David Koski
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*Affiliations of listed individuals are contained in the Appendices.

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I. Introduction

Suburban Cook County has been labeled the sleeping giant—but it is not sleeping anymore. Between 1970 and 1980, employment in suburban Cook County increased by 25%. In comparison with its five adjacent suburban counties, suburban Cook County has the largest population, highest employment density, and largest employment and household concentrations. Moderate population growth and significant increases in employment and number of households are forecast for the next 20 years.

Among the subareas of suburban Cook County, however, there is great diversity in existing and predicted demographic characteristics and economic development activities. Many communities are over 100 years old and do not display the traits of the newer developing suburbs, where employment bases, employment patterns, household concentrations, and work trip patterns vary greatly.

This diversity extends to suburban Cook County's transportation problems and potential solutions. In some areas, the maturity of the transportation system makes consideration of any new road or infrastructure construction difficult. Factory workers in industrial areas have travel needs and expectations that differ from those of office workers in suburban activity centers.

Changing Travel Patterns

The Chicago area, long known as America's hub of transportation, is also known as home to one of the oldest and largest public transportation systems in the country. The backbone of that system—the commuter railroads and rapid transit lines—was put into place a century ago and has served the downtown-oriented commuter with distinction.

But travel patterns have changed. Today, only about half of the Chicago area's daily 3.1 million work trips are to or from the center city. The rest are suburb to suburb. And the proportion of these trips continues to grow at an increasing rate as employment follows households to the suburbs. According to the 1980 Census, approximately 65% of the work trips with origins or destinations in Cook County were suburb to suburb.

Much of suburban Cook County's recent growth has taken place at locations miles from the nearest rail line. As a result, automobile traffic has increased, as even the downtown-bound commuter must drive to reach a transit stop.

Traffic Congestion

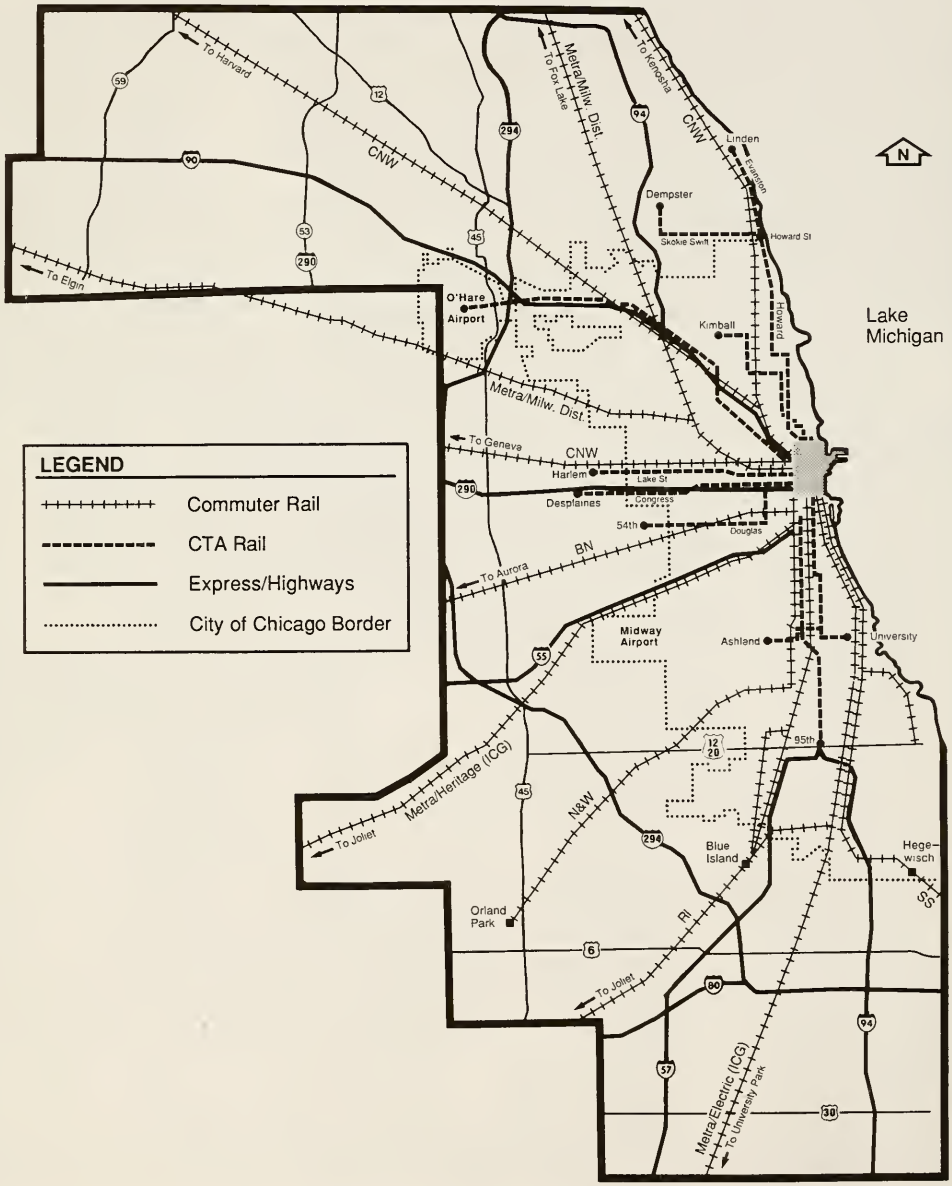
Between 1975 and 1985, the number of cars registered in suburban Cook County increased from 1.3 million to 1.7 million. Between 1970 and 1980, the use of the automobile for work trips with origins and destinations inside suburban Cook County increased by 33%.

The Chicago metropolitan area as a whole is facing increasing congestion on its freeway network, as evidenced by the following statistics from the Federal Highway Administration:

	1984 Actual	2005 Estimated	% Increase
Freeway Miles	397	397	0
Annual Vehicle Miles (millions)	9,843	11,850	20
Annual Recurring Congestion Vehicle-Miles (millions)	1,155	2,384	106
Annual Vehicle-Hours of Delay (millions)	44.3	126.8	186
Total Annual Excess Fuel (million gallons)	48.4	135.3	180

With these changing traffic patterns and overloaded highway facilities has come congestion. In 1985, morning peak period highway speeds averaged 16 mph in west Cook County; 19-23 mph in northwest, northeast, and southwest Cook County; and 37 mph in southeast Cook County.

Cook County
Commuter Rail, Rapid Transit
and Expressway System



II. The Project:

IDENTIFYING TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS FOR SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY

It is against this background that the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) launched the current initiative to form a partnership with suburban jurisdictions for the purpose of addressing the mobility needs in the metropolitan area. One element of this program is to consider the transportation problems in suburban Cook County and to recommend a program of actions aimed at reducing traffic congestion and improving travel and commuting in the county.

The RTA

Since 1974 the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), an umbrella agency for three mass transit providers (Pace, Metra, and CTA), has been overseeing transit in the area. Headed by a 12-member board representing Chicago, suburban Cook County, and the five collar counties of DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will, the RTA is big business: It ranks as the second largest business in Illinois based on assets.

RTA coordinates funding and planning for transit in the area. The three RTA service boards are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the trains and buses in the Chicago metropolitan area. CTA is responsible for 215 route miles of elevated and subway rapid transit service and 2090 bus route miles. Metra operates 329.5 miles of heavy commuter rail over the properties of seven railroads and 11 main routes and 2 branches. Pace operates 230 suburban fixed and feeder bus routes and an extensive paratransit service network.

The ITE Study Team

The RTA enlisted the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) to assist in the effort to identify transportation options for suburban Cook County. ITE formed a study team to develop specific recommendations, with special emphasis on the multi-faceted role that transit can and should play in suburban Cook County.

Members of the ITE study team represented a variety of disciplines, including land development and real estate, urban planning, transportation planning, rail and bus operations, traffic operations, and public/private cooperation. Information on the members of the study team is included in Appendix B.

Information assembled by the staff of RTA was reviewed by the ITE study team. This information included data on the population, employment, and economic development trends for the Chicago metropolitan area in general and suburban Cook County in particular, current and planned highway and mass transit systems serving the area, and work travel patterns along with mode choice information. Background on general and specific transportation issues in suburban Cook County was also provided to the ITE study team by the RTA.

The ITE study team next spent two days touring existing transportation facilities in south and west Cook County, and conducting interviews with more than 20 Cook County community and transportation leaders (see Appendix C).

The Workshop

Finally, the study team participated in a 1½ day workshop on "Transportation Options for Suburban Cook County," conducted on July 15-16, 1987. Approximately 100 community and transportation leaders from suburban Cook County participated in the workshop.

Included in the workshop were presentations by members of the ITE study team on the transportation issues facing suburban Cook County, comments on these issues by a distinguished response panel (names and affiliations of response panel members appear in Appendix D), separate workshops that allowed specific discussions on transportation problems facing south and west Cook County, presentations of the initial set of recommendations from the ITE study team, and comments on these recommendations by those attending the workshop.

EXPRESS LANES
Chicago Loop
Chicago Loop

III. ITE Study Team Recommendations

The ITE study team was asked to evaluate the diverse economic trends, demographic characteristics, and travel patterns prevailing in suburban Cook County and to recommend potential means of improving mobility within suburban Cook County. In addition, the ITE study team was asked to develop specific recommendations concerning the multi-faceted role transit can assume in fostering revitalization in economically depressed areas and in stimulating continued economic gains in existing growth areas. Presentation of options for two specific transportation corridors in south and west Cook County—the Tri-State corridor and the Metra Electric corridor—was also requested from the ITE study team.

The recommendations are presented as a list of options for consideration. Although many of these options have been successfully applied in other parts of the country, their potential for success in suburban Cook County will be determined by suburban Cook County's residents and their elected leaders.

A. TRANSPORTATION PLANNING IN SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY

Coordinating Transportation Planning in Suburban Cook County

A coordinated transportation planning process for suburban Cook County should be considered. With a coordinated transportation planning process, suburban Cook County will be in a better position to determine its current and future needs.

Highways and transit are integral parts of the transportation system and cannot be considered separately. The same is true for transportation planning and operations. The agencies responsible for transportation in suburban Cook County need to work together to determine and to meet the transportation goals of the county.

Whether such a process for transportation planning in suburban Cook County should be launched as part of the Cook County government or through a consortium of agencies can only be decided by discussions among all the involved parties, including the RTA, officials of Cook County, Illinois Department of Transportation, Illinois State Toll Highway Authority, Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS), and the municipal associations and Councils of Mayors within suburban Cook County.

The RTA and Transportation Planning

RTA is one of the primary transportation planning agencies in the area, and is looked upon by most as the primary agency for transit planning in suburban Cook County. RTA can play a significant role in reducing overlapping services and responsibilities and in determining the best allocation of scarce funding resources. It can provide seed money to test innovative ideas that—if successful—can then be implemented by service providers and local agencies.

RTA should consider formal arrangements to assure that public officials and private interests continue to be included in the transportation planning process. These arrangements should include ongoing procedures to keep municipal and other public officials better informed about transportation options and the impacts of each option.

Within the RTA, close coordination between the RTA and its Service Boards is essential. For example, the RTA should project a united front when going to legislatures to request increased funding. One message, one agenda, and one strategy to present to the legislatures should be developed jointly by the RTA and its Service Boards.

While an RTA strategic plan that includes a long-term commitment to an investment strategy in transit is necessary if long-term needs are to be met, most people care little about the long-range transportation planning process. They want to know what services can be made available now. The RTA strategic plan therefore must be flexible enough to address needs as they arise and to take some chances on unproven options.

Finally, the RTA should strengthen and expand efforts to coordinate activities between the RTA and other agencies serving suburban Cook County, such as municipal associations and the councils of mayors.

Roles and Responsibilities of Local Organizations

While the RTA can play a leadership role, local groups must play an active role in promulgating transportation plans and projects.

This is especially true in suburban Cook County, where employment bases, patterns of employment, household concentrations, and work trip patterns vary greatly. Suburban Cook County encompasses older industrial areas in the southern and western segments; fast-growing service and light industrial areas primarily in northwest Cook, and the more stable areas of North Cook, where pockets of new development are also located. Throughout suburban Cook County pockets of wealthy communities and pockets of poor communities can be found.

Local groups have a role in developing a strategic approach to solving transportation problems. Business and community groups such as the suburban conferences of mayors and managers can communicate to RTA the needs of their constituents. For example, the Northwest Municipal Conference has been playing an increasingly important role in transportation planning and in implementing transportation improvements in northwest Cook County. The South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) in south Cook and the West Central Municipal Conference in west Cook could also strengthen their involvement in local and regional transportation decision making.

It is through this network of local organizations that the input from individual citizens and towns can be solicited and disseminated to transportation agencies prior to their making any final decision on a project. In addition, it is these local organizations that would be in the best position to directly involve citizens and employers in implementing transportation solutions, and coordinating development with the transportation system by linking building and zoning permits with the provisions of transit facilities.

Transportation Management Associations

Transportation management associations (TMAs) are being formed around the country in major activity centers and specific corridors, to provide policy leadership and advocacy, demand management, and transportation services. The private sector, acting through TMAs, can provide direct incentives to employees to change their travel behavior. For example, flexible work hours, ridesharing programs, and employer subsidies to users of public transportation can be implemented through TMA's both on an individual company basis and on an areawide basis to help reduce the demand on the highway system during the most congested peak periods.

Regional Transportation Planning

Just as transportation needs of local jurisdictions should be considered as part of a coordinated approach for suburban Cook County, so must the transportation needs of suburban Cook County be considered in coordination with the rest of the region, including the other suburban counties and the City of Chicago. Transportation problems do not stop at political boundaries, and neither should the transportation solutions. All levels of government, transportation service providers and the private sector should coordinate their efforts to meet short-term and long-term transportation needs, consistent with the strategic goals and objectives of the region.

B. TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE DEVELOPMENT

Land Use Patterns to Support Transit

The form and function of the region's transportation system and land use patterns are interrelated. While development densities in portions of suburban Cook County are not high enough to support traditional transit, efforts can be made to encourage future development patterns that are more amenable to transit.

For example, mixed-use developments, such as hotel/office/retail centers, that are suited to transit use should be promoted. New developments should be located so as to

take advantage of the transportation system's unused capacity in the travel direction opposite to peak period flows. Comprehensive land use plans should be adjusted to accommodate transit.

These steps will require a stronger commitment to land use management by the local municipalities and developers. A complete data base of existing and proposed land uses and transportation capabilities for suburban Cook County should be developed and maintained.

Site Design to Encourage Transit Use

Not enough attention has been paid to locating buildings and their entrances so as to optimize pedestrian access to transit stations and stops. The physical design of new development should encourage transit and high occupancy vehicle use. Criteria for transit access in site layout and design—such as transit stops within walking distance of riders' origins and destinations—should be developed, and these criteria should then be distributed by RTA to local zoning and planning boards. The zoning and planning boards should then require transit-compatible design as a condition of development approval.

Joint development around transit stations should be encouraged in coordination with local interests. Joint efforts between transit stations and site developers offer the potential not only for economic benefits, but also for the development of nodes of density that can generate increased numbers of transit users. Efforts such as those just begun by the Northern Illinois Planning Commission and the CTA, involving the identification and promotion of rapid transit stations as feasible sites for joint development opportunities, should be pursued.

Education and Training

A series of seminars should be initiated to provide public and private groups with education and training on the potential effects of transportation on land development and redevelopment, and on the likely effects of development on the transportation system. Public officials, zoning and planning boards, and other decision makers would benefit by becoming more sensitive about the transportation effects of their decisions. Transportation professionals would benefit by becoming more knowledgeable about the potential transportation impacts of various development options and measures to mitigate those impacts. Developers would benefit by becoming aware of the impact their development decisions have on traffic and transportation patterns.

C. INCREASING VEHICLE OCCUPANCY IN SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY

Addressing the transportation problems of suburban Cook County will require a combination of supply management and demand management strategies. Supply management strategies include additions and improvements to highway and transit facilities. The purpose of demand management strategies is to reduce the number of vehicles that must use these facilities during the most congested time periods —by increasing the number of persons who rideshare or use transit, and by staggering work hours.

Improving Existing Transit Service

If transit is to play a viable role in reducing congestion in the suburbs, the basics of good transit service must be addressed first. In suburban Cook County, this will require innovative as well as conventional transit services. Initiatives begun by Pace will need to be pursued further, including targeting demand-responsive and subscription paratransit services to particular origins and destinations, such as commuter rail stations and community colleges.

Demand Management

People must be given incentives to switch to transit or ridesharing. Although transit use has been declining nationwide, exceptions to this trend can be found in areas where measures have been taken to give high occupancy vehicles (HOVs) a time and predictability advantage over single-passenger cars through HOV lanes. Another common ingredient of successful HOV programs has been employer and private sector support. Some of the incentives that have been offered to increase vehicle occupancy by encouraging transit use and carpool/vanpool participation include:

- Carpooling and vanpooling programs administered by transportation management associations.
- Parking management programs (preferred parking for HOVs, locating HOV parking in prime locations closest to building, premium parking charges for non-HOVs, and easy-access park and-ride lots).
- Employer-provided subsidies for transit use.
- Requirements that developers ensure adequate level of service on adjacent streets, adequate parking facilities, and access to transit service.
- Priority measures for HOVs, including preferred access, bottleneck and toll bypasses, and special lanes.
- Traffic mitigation ordinances for new development, combining voluntary incentives for developers with mandatory actions, if needed.

The RTA should encourage the implementation of these measures whenever possible throughout suburban Cook County.

HOV Express Lanes

The Chicago area has not made use of HOV express lanes to the extent found in other metropolitan areas. Public opinion in the Chicago area has been against this option as a result of a previous experience with contra-flow bus lanes in downtown Chicago.

However, HOV express lanes have been implemented safely and to great advantage in other areas of the country—the Shirley Highway and I-66 in Washington, D.C., the San

Bernardino busway, the Pittsburgh busways, the express lanes on Seattle freeways, and the busway system in Houston, to name but a few. Their use in the Chicago area warrants another look.

D. SERVING THE NONTRADITIONAL TRANSIT MARKETS IN SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY

Innovation—The Cornerstone of Service to Nontraditional Markets

The Chicago area has a history of generating and implementing new ideas in transportation. However, their implementation has been slowed in recent years by growing institutional barriers. RTA and its service boards are in the best position to break down these barriers and to restore the Chicago area to its position of preeminence in public transportation. The recent award of an $80,000 challenge grant by RTA to the Northwest Municipal Conference (NWMC), to be met with $40,000 from the NWMC, is a prime example.

RTA should serve as a clearinghouse for the testing of new transit service and innovations. While many of the innovations may fail, those that succeed will be the cornerstone of service in nontraditional markets. Some may be loss leaders—that is, they may appear to lose money in the short term, but they will prove fruitful in the long term. RTA can receive and prioritize ideas, provide the seed money for testing and demonstrations, evaluate the effort, and make recommendations for the longer term based on the results of the testing and demonstrations. Some examples of ideas that are worthy of consideration follow.

Suburban Employment Centers

RTA should sponsor a program to demonstrate how nontraditional transportation modes can be used to serve suburban employment centers, such as Woodfield Mall, and to identify opportunities for private sponsorship and delivery of such transportation.

Areas that are just now beginning to evolve into future suburban employment centers should be identified, and transit service should be an integral part of planning for and development of these centers.

Although suburban employment centers might appear to have sufficient numbers of employees to support traditional transit services, this is usually not the case; the employees are spread out too thinly to allow regular transit to function cost-effectively.

Nontraditional service will therefore be necessary to serve these nontraditional needs. The services provided must be market driven—i.e., they must be specifically designed for each employment center in question. To convince a suburban office worker to leave his or her car at home will require something more attractive than conventional bus service. Users will want door-to-door service, personal comfort, relative privacy, schedule flexibility, and midday mobility.

The private sector not only has a stake in the success of these efforts, but many have more flexibility to implement nontraditional services. About 10% of transit service nationwide is already provided by private operators, many under contract with the public authority. Using similar arrangements, Pace could consider contracting with private carriers to provide service to suburban employment centers. Other options include nonsubsidized private transit service, employer-paid services, and service sponsored by major activity centers. Hotels in the Rosemont area, for example, could consider pooling their resources to provide shuttle service to O'Hare Airport.

Serving Transit-Dependent Markets in the Suburbs

Transit-dependent markets in suburban Cook County need to be better identified and served. The RTA should conduct demonstration programs to serve the needs of these transit-dependent persons.

The closing of industrial job sites in the city and the inner suburbs has generated pockets of unemployment at the same time that employment opportunities are increasing in many of suburban Cook County communities. A demonstration program should be initiated to show how these pockets of unemployment can be linked to employment centers in suburban Cook County.

For example, the expanding hotel and service businesses in the suburbs could benefit from access to the labor force in the city. Job opportunities being created in north Cook County could be filled by workers from south Cook. The resulting potential for a growing volume of reverse commute trips (i.e., from city home to suburban job site, going against the traditional traffic patterns) and north/south trips within the county represents an opportunity for innovative transit strategies.

Nontraditional transit options should continue to be investigated to serve the unique needs of university students in suburban Cook County. Students of community colleges and other educational facilities in suburban Cook County have difficulties getting to the campuses by transit due to indirect routes and infrequent service, particularly at night. Because of the importance of these institutions in preparing young minorities and poor people for employment and in retraining blue collar workers, this is a problem requiring a solution.

E. RAIL—SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY'S UNIQUE TRANSPORTATION RESOURCE

The rail network in Cook County is a unique and irreplaceable resource. This is a feature that sets this region apart from other metropolitan areas.

Taking Advantage of Existing Rail Corridors

One of the keys to getting the most out of these facilities is to view the existing rail rights-of-way as true transportation corridors, i.e. channels for movement by whatever mode or modes make the most sense.

The RTA should initiate a review of the rail network in suburban Cook County leading to the preservation of rights-of-way for possible future transit use. The review should include all rail lines not currently used for passenger service. Consideration should be given to connecting existing east-west passenger rail lines with ideally situated north-south routes, to serve the changing travel patterns in suburban Cook County and to tie together the existing massive rail plant into a coordinated system.

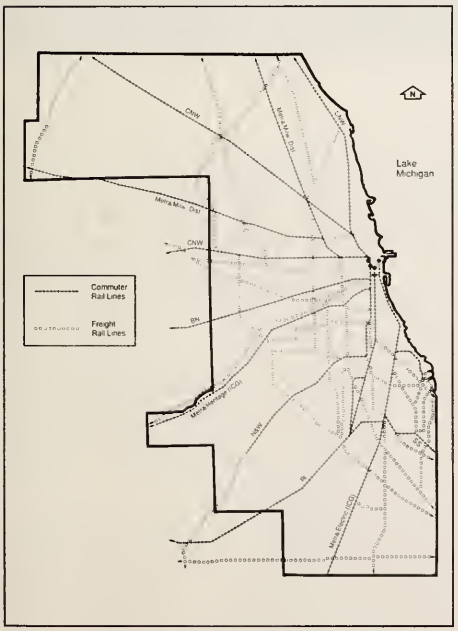
Long-term staged development of these rail corridors should be considered so as to continuously adapt to changing development and travel patterns. These changes should be coordinated with the need for "flexible" modes, i.e., buses.

Options for the future use of rail corridors do not have to be limited to commuter rail. For example, initial use of these transportation corridors could be by conventional buses and other high occupancy vehicles. As travel intensity increases, more advanced technologies, e.g. guided buses, could be introduced, similar to systems operating in West Germany and Australia. These "O-Bahn-type" systems could be conventionally powered or dual powered (diesel or electric). Eventually, advanced light rail systems might be used, such as the automated guideway transit (AGT) systems already in operation in Vancouver and Lille and also soon to come into service at O'Hare Airport.

If options are in place for the transportation use of freight line rights-of-way that are currently active but that could become inactive in the future, large freight yards could become available for new development, which would generate users of the transportation service in the rail corridor.

Full Coordination of Bus and Rail Service

To reduce the stress of using the overall system, the RTA should further strengthen the coordination of bus, rapid transit, and commuter rail service. Parking facilities at stations, feeder/distributor bus service, and rail service should be operated as integral parts of one system. Pricing for these services should be set with this objective in mind. At rail stations, parking fees should be set so that they will encourage use of feeder buses (when available) and ridesharing, but will not discourage use of the rail system. RTA should work with local jurisdictions to reduce traffic and parking in residential areas in the vicinity of rail stations.



Cook County
Commuter and Freight Rail Lines

F.
THE I-57/ICG/ROCK ISLAND CORRIDORS

The ITE study team was specifically asked to provide recommendations on the Metra Electric Illinois Central Gulf (ICG) railroad corridor. But any consideration of transportation services in this area must also look at the Interstate 57 and Rock Island Railroad corridors. These corridors are diverse in their income, employment, and social characteristics. They generally include older industrial areas in the north and east and newly developed areas in the south and west. Although the industrial areas have lost employment in recent years, future developments such as the Metropolitan Sanitary District's (MSD) River Edge Renaissance proposal, which includes the leasing of hundreds of acres of MSD land along the Cal-Sag Channel for commercial, office, research, industrial, and/or residential development, could reverse this trend.

The South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) should continue and increase its efforts toward the coordinated development of the I-57/ICG/Rock Island corridors. The RTA should work with the SSMMA to locate new developments requiring transit service along those corridors that are best suited for transit service. One such corridor is Cicero Avenue (Route 50)—a strategically located north-south route which in some areas parallels Interstate 57 and which traverses south Cook County and extends into Chicago.

The RTA and SSMMA should also encourage implementation of joint development projects such as those at the Tinley Park 80th Avenue commuter rail station. Sponsored by the Village of Tinley Park and RTA, the project includes development of the area around the station with a mixture of office, research, and light industrial facilities. The 80th Avenue Station project should be a model for using commuter rail lines as integral components of future development plans at other Metra stations.

G.
THE TRI-STATE TOLLWAY CORRIDOR

The Tri-State Tollway is strategically located about 20 miles west of the Loop and passes through some of the most densely populated portions of suburban Cook County. Its route serves such major traffic generators as Oak Brook and O'Hare Airport. The corridor is primarily residential and industrial, although in recent years it has seen service-oriented and commercial development.

Fixed guideway transit routes in the corridor are all on east-west lines. The growth in north-south travel patterns results in serious congestion along the tollway, especially during peak hours.

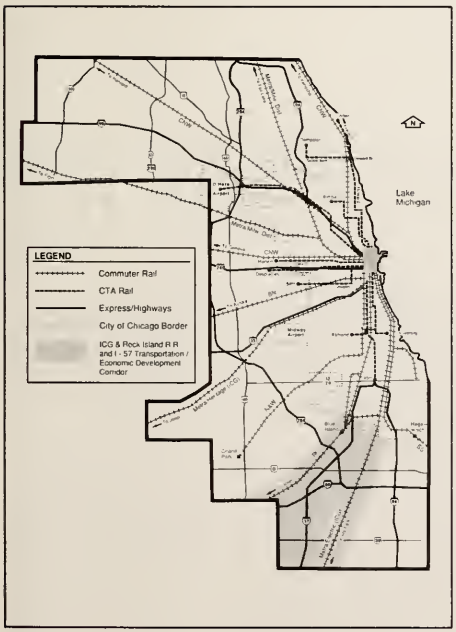
While the success of the tollway is due in large part to its exemplary operation by the Illinois Toll Highway Authority, the Tri-State Tollway is serving a larger volume of trips than was originally planned. Its role has changed from primarily serving interstate travel to primarily serving commuter travel: commuters currently represent 80% of tollway traffic.

Due to the strategic importance of this corridor to suburban Cook County and the entire Chicago metropolitan area, the chairperson of RTA, the secretary of the Illinois Department of Transportation, and the executive director of the Illinois Toll Highway Authority should jointly appoint a special task force consisting of representatives of local and regional agencies to study problems and opportunities in the Tri-State Corridor. Specifically, the task force should:

- Identify options to increase the people-carrying capacity of the Tollway.
- Consider priority treatment for transit and high-occupancy vehicles in the corridor.
- Investigate innovative toll collection techniques to improve traffic flow.
- Investigate increased utilization of existing and potential transportation corridors which run parallel to the Tri-State, such as Route 83.

To cut down on the delays caused at the toll collection booths, the following options should be considered:

- Monthly passes.



Cook County Commuter Rail, Rapid Transit and Expressway System

- On-ramp toll collection to replace barrier toll collection booths on the main line of the highway (if it can be accomplished without backing up traffic onto local roads).
- Credit-card toll collection.
- Automatic vehicle identification (through scanning), with automatic billing (done on a voluntary basis due to privacy issue—see experiences from del Coronado Bridge in San Diego and from Hong Kong.)

H. O'HARE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

No consideration of transportation options for suburban Cook County would be complete without taking into account O'Hare International Airport.

Traffic volumes in and around O'Hare International Airport are expected to continue to increase. Even if the number of landings were to remain the same, street traffic volume would increase because planes are getting larger and carrying more and more passengers. The lack of an access point from the west forces patrons from that area onto existing access routes—thereby exacerbating an already severe congestion problem.

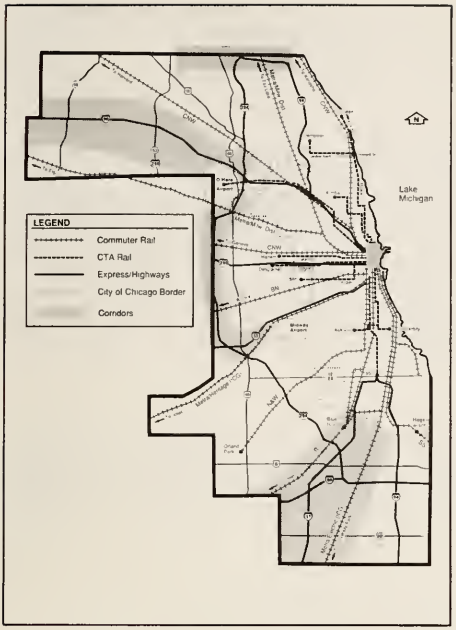
To help relieve congestion and to improve internal circulation, access to O'Hare International Airport from the north and the west should be pursued. Consideration should also be given to providing access to O'Hare from the south.

Any new access points to O'Hare should include transit access. Access to and from jobs in the O'Hare complex should also be enhanced. For example, the Rosemont and Cumberland areas and the O'Hare employee parking lot could be linked to the 2.6-mile O'Hare Automatic Guideway Transit (AGT) system, which is scheduled to begin operation in 1990.

I. WHO PAYS?

Any consideration of the recommendations contained in this report and of any other improvements to the transportation system must address the following basis issues:

- How much will the improvement cost?
- Who will pay for it?
- What return on investment will be realized?



Suburban Cook County Transportation/Economic Development Corridors

Transit Funding Issues

One question that must first be answered is how will the benefits realized from investments be defined. Only increased ridership and higher farebox revenues would be included under the more narrow definition of benefits from transit investments. However, it is important that the RTA and other providers of transportation service in suburban Cook County not be forced to rely exclusively on such narrow definitions of benefits. Reduced traffic congestion, cleaner air, and the economic development in the region are among the benefits, which, although harder to measure, are just as real, and therefore should be a part of any analysis of transportation investment strategies for suburban Cook County.

Under any scenario, future funding will be limited. The trend will be for less reliance on federal and state funding. In addition, Illinois state law requires that 50% of RTA's operating expenses be recovered from system-generated revenues (primarily fares). Transit funding choices thus involve increasing revenues (by attracting more riders or by charging higher fares) or cutting expenses. Neither choice is easy to implement.

A current shortage of funds should not be used as an excuse for not planning for future transit service. As options and initiatives are identified and considered, the potential for more funding improves. A major infrastructure need that can be justified and documented may reduce the likelihood that a less costly, but inadequate, alternative will be funded and implemented. Initiatives and funding grow together.

The RTA has set aside funds for the testing of innovative ideas. These funds could be made available as seed money for transit initiatives in suburban Cook County. Local groups of representatives from the community and the service boards should be responsible for developing ideas for innovative services to meet determined needs and for proposing these ideas to RTA.

Highways

The Illinois Department of Transportation estimates that over 1,000 lane miles of highways will have to be added to the Cook County highway system in the next five years,

but that funding from conventional sources is only available for about 350 miles. Clearly, other sources of revenue not used extensively in the past will have to be more aggressively pursued if these highway needs are to be met.

The success of the Tri-State Tollway has favorable implications for the use of tolls on highways in suburban Cook County. In the past, toll implementation decisions were based exclusively on the need to pay for the construction and maintenance of a facility. Today, most existing toll facilities in this country have successfully paid for themselves, thus dispelling fears that construction bonds could not possibly be paid off by toll revenues. Decisions on constructing new toll roads should take into account the worsening traffic congestion situation and the important need for mobility. The success—measured in terms of usage and revenues—of the new Dulles Toll Road outside Washington, D.C., demonstrates that drivers are willing to pay for the privilege of reduced congestion and predictable commuting times.

RTA should be involved in any discussions regarding the planning and operation of existing and future highway toll facilities in suburban Cook County. Priority treatment for transit and other high occupancy vehicles at toll booths and on the highway should be an integral part of these discussions.

Private Sector

Finally, the potential for private funding should not be underestimated. Private involvement in financing transportation improvements is growing. Private transit operators, developer impact fees, and tax increment districts are seen as a way of supplementing scarce public resources. The use of impact fees to fund transportation improvements should be explored.

IV. CLOSING

In carrying out this project, the ITE study team was impressed with the depth of concern and enthusiasm displayed by all those who participated. Converting this enthusiasm into broad cooperation among organizations and individuals in suburban Cook County should be a primary challenge. The benefits of a good transportation system are shared by all levels of government and the private sector. If these parties also participate in the planning of the transportation system and share in the costs of the system, much progress would be made toward meeting the mobility needs of suburban Cook County.

Appendices

A. OTHER ISSUES AND OBSERVATIONS

In addition to the issues and recommendations discussed previously in this report, participants in the conference offered the following observations:

- Long-term consideration should be given to taking better advantage of the area's network of waterways and canals for the movement of people and goods.
- A long-term marketing strategy should be pursued aimed at generating a "transit culture" in the region, especially among the youth.
- To help the southwest Cook County suburbs realize their growth potential, transit service along the Stevenson Expressway should be expanded.
- Any serious consideration of a third airport in the Chicago area should include transportation needs and services as an integral part of the planning process.
- Long-term consideration should be given to a belt (circumferential) rapid transit corridor with the airports as anchors to serve the growing north-south travel patterns in suburban Cook County.

B. ITE STUDY TEAM MEMBERS

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ITE Staff
Thomas W. Brahms—Executive Director
Kathryn Harrington-Hughes—Communications Director
Mark R. Norman—Professional Programs Director

C. LISTING OF THOSE INTERVIEWED BY ITE STUDY TEAM

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Joanne Alter—Trustee, Metropolitan Sanitary District. Chairman of the District's Real Estate Committee.
Kirk Brown—Director, Office of Planning & Program, Illinois Department of Transportation.
Lawrence Christmas—Executive Director of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission. Previous Executive Director of Metropolitan Housing & Planning Council.
Jonathan Gilbert—Metra Board Member, appointed by the suburban members of the Cook County Board.
John Hausman—Member of the Pace Board. President of the Village of LaGrange, IL.
Joe Ligas—Deputy Director of the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS), the Metropolitan Planning Organization for northeastern Illinois.
Warren Nugent—Metra Board Member, appointed by the Suburban Members of the Cook County Board. Former Chairman of the North Suburban Mass Transit District (NORTRAN).
Kathleen Parker—RTA Board Member, appointed by Suburban Members of the Cook County Board. RTA's appointee to the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission. Chairs the RTA Board's Mobility Limited Committee.

Aurelia Pucinski—Trustee, Metropolitan Sanitary District. Chairman of the District's Economic Development Committee.
Patrick Rea—Vice President, First National Bank of Chicago. Trustee of the Village of Tinley Park.
Lewis Sherman—President, Village of Steger, Illinois
Curtis Simonson—Director of Economic Development, Morton College (Cicero).
Julia Sommer—Executive Director of the Southwest Suburban Economic Development Corporation.
Vernon Squires—Member of the Pace Board. President of the Village of Wilmette, IL.
Chester Stranczek—Member of Pace Board. Mayor of Crestwood, IL.
William Walsh—RTA Board Member, appointed by suburban members of the Cook County Board. Former member of the Illinois General Assembly. Chairs the RTA Board's Legislative Affairs Committee.

D.
CONFERENCE RESPONSE PANEL

Loleta A. Didrickson—State Representative, Homewood, Illinois.
Paul A. Dillon—Director, Government Services, Laventhol & Horwath.
William (Bill) Grams—Executive Director, Northwest Municipal Conference.
Paul M. Green—Director, Institute for Public Policy & Administration, Governor's State University.
Jacquelyn K. Harder—Economic Development Advisory Coordinator, Cook County Office of Economic Development.
Richard Kelly, Jr.—State Senator, Hazel Crest, Illinois.
Pierce McCabe—Mayor, Village of Brookfield.
Thomas Morsch, Jr.—Executive Director, Illinois State Toll Highway Authority.
Michael J. Scholefield—City Administrator, City of Oak Forest.
David Young—*Chicago Tribune*.

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